2: Bowers E-5 (1930-1931)1950 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

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482
285

FIG. 4.—Mrs. Good Bear

10: Neill H(no date) 1884 NQ17 Mandan NQ17

attentive and polite in conveying our baggage on board. We now perceived another American flag flying in the village on the south side of the river, while that of the Black Cat was still displayed over the hut we had occupied. Our conductor now informed us the flag we saw in the opposite village was his property, and had been hoisted by his orders over his own hut, where he begged we would take up our lodgings. The young men, I observed were very prompt in getting our horses over. They fastened a line to the horse's mouth, the end of which one of them takes in his teeth, and swims on ahead, while others swim along on each side, and in the rear, draws the horse on very expeditiously. They swim remarkably swift, and notwithstanding the Missouri at this place is half a mile wide, and the current very strong, they drift down but a very considerable distance before they land.

Their canoes are of very singular construction and a stranger would scarcely dare venture his life in them to cross such a deep and rapid stream. They are of a circular form; the timbers are nothing but a few bent willows of about three inches in circumference, over which is stretched a raw buffalo hide, with the hair inside, and sewed first to the gunwales which are generally of a willow, about two inches in diameter. I was really surprised to see the great weight that one of those slender vessels would carry. We embarked, baggage, saddles, etc., weighing at least 200 pounds, Mr. Chaboillez and myself, and our ferryman, who was a remarkably stout fellow. Our canoe or dish would have supported at least 100 pounds more. What they make use of, in lieu of a paddle, is a pole about five feet long, split at one end so as to admit of a piece of board, about two feet long, and half a foot broad, which is lashed to the pole and forms a kind of cross, and as there is but one made use of for each canoe, and he that paddles pulls directly for the opposite shore, every stroke he gives turns his dish almost entirely around; when, to preserve his position and place him fronting his intended, route he must give a stroke upon the other hand which brings him up again, and so on until he gets over the river, which, however, is not accomplished until they have drifted down nearly a mile.

Some of them, I observed, were more expert than others in managing their dishes, and did not drift more than a quarter of a mile. But as these vessels are very light they have the precaution to carry them upon their heads, or slung upon their backs to a considerable distance higher up the river, than where they wish to land. When we were on the water our conductor repeatedly made signs to us to salute the flag, by firing our guns, but we did not think proper to comply with his wishes or pretended we did not comprehend him.

We soon after landed at the village, which is situated upon the very edge of the bank. Here we were received by another